



Guide to the 2020 Census Post Enumeration Exercise

1. Census

The Census Post Enumeration exercise (Census PE) forms part of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment's (the department) Schools Funding Assurance Framework and is an annual process to verify the accuracy of student information provided by schools in the Non-government schools census (the Census). Participation in the 2020 Census PE is a requirement under the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

2. Process Overview

The department engages external contractors to visit the schools between February and May 2021. A contractor will be in touch to arrange the school visit. School visits in most cases should not take longer than one to two days.

The contractors will compare the school's 2020 census returns (student data only) against school-based records, including enrolment and attendance records. If the school has a campus, this includes a review of the campus documentation. Similarly, if any documentation upon which census data is based is held at a separate location (such as centralized administration office), the contractors will require this documentation on the day of the visit. Please ensure that all school-based records are located at the single location where the visit will take place.

At the completion of the visit, a school contact officer will be asked to sign a document to acknowledge they have been presented with initial Census PE findings. The contractor will then provide a report to the department on its findings, and where discrepancies are found, make recommendations to the department regarding data adjustments.

Based on the results of the findings detailed in the report, changes to the school's 2020 census data may be made. Some of these changes may impact on the school's funding entitlement for 2020 and have a flow-on effect to the school's estimated 2021 funding entitlement.

3. Validation of Documentation

The contractors will require assistance from school staff to gain access to school registers, attendance records, class rolls, documentation relating to students with disabilities, students on visas and overseas students (if applicable) and other documentation that will help verify the census data.

Please ensure all supporting documentation is collated and available for the contractors during the visits.

3.1 NCCD & Students with Disability

2020 is the third year schools were required to report students with disabilities in accordance with the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) as part of census. The 2020 Census PE process will include ensuring the school has retained the evidence required to report students in the NCCD.

The contractors will validate all NCCD students reported in supplementary, substantial and extensive adjustment levels. For those NCCD students reported in Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP), contractors will validate a 5% random sample. The contractor will advise the QDTP sample to be validated.

As outlined in the 2020 Census Requirements, to report a student in the NCCD there must be evidence the student has been provided with an adjustment/s for a minimum period of 6 weeks of school education (excluding school holiday periods) in the 12 months preceding Census Day, to address the functional impact of a disability. The 2020 Census Requirements can be access on SchoolsHUB, within the Non-government schools Census section.

The contractors will verify that the school has evidence for each student in each of the following categories:

1. the student has a disability (defined in Appendix 4 Glossary of the NCCD Guidelines);
2. the student has been counted in the school's census (total count) for 2020;
3. the student has been provided with an adjustment(s) for a minimum period of six weeks of school education (excluding school holiday periods) – in the 12 months preceding the relevant reference date for the 2020 NCCD – to address the functional impact of a disability; and
4. appropriate documentary evidence is held that supports the inclusion of the student in the NCCD.

Changes to NCCD evidence requirements in 2020

Some of the NCCD evidence requirements for the 2020 Census were adjusted to account for the impact of COVID-19. This resulted in:

- the minimum period for adjustments to address the functional impact of a disability has been reduced from ten weeks to six weeks.

Schools were also not required to collect evidence of ongoing monitoring and review of adjustments for the following student cohorts:

- Foundation (year 1 minus 1) students
- new enrolments, this may include
 - students who commenced at the school in 2020
 - students transitioning between levels of schools (for example, primary to secondary, or moving campuses)
- students with newly diagnosed or newly imputed disability
- students attending special assistance schools.

In many schools, the evidence required to report a student in the NCCD may already exist in the form of a comprehensive personalised learning or adjustment plan. Such personalised plans may present the contractor with all (or a majority) of the evidentiary requirements needed for the student to be validated.

Where such comprehensive documents or plans are not available, or do not cover all the evidentiary requirements, the contractor will need to validate students with other school-held documentary evidence. Examples of evidence to support a student's inclusion in the NCCD are available at <https://www.nccd.edu.au/tools/examples-evidence-support-students-inclusion-nccd>.

The contractor will only be looking to verify that the school has the evidence required to report a student in the NCCD. Any assessment of a school's decision to report a student in the NCCD, or the level of adjustment in which the student has been reported is outside the scope of the Census PE.

3.2 COVID-19 related assurance requirements

In 2020 the Minister for Education implemented a number of measures in response to COVID-19 and its impact on schools. The 2020 Census PE will incorporate assurance of two of these measures. These measures are:

- The regulatory change requiring schools to offer a physical learning environment for students who required it from the start of Term 2, 2020
- The financial assistance including early access to July 2020 recurrent funding and the school hygiene assistance funding, where applicable.

As part of the check, contractors will need to sight documentation in support of school eligibility for these measures, where relevant. Acceptable documentation includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- a plan outlining COVID-19 management measures at the school or
- information on availability of/resuming classroom-based learning from:
 - newsletters
 - emails
 - letters
 - posts on school external websites or intranet sites

Financial assistance requirements

If a school is operated by an approved authority that received a May payment of early July funding, contractors must sight documentation supporting the claim that the approved authority had a plan to fully re-open by 1 June 2020.

- Departmental communication to approved authorities defined a school being fully re-opened as "classroom-based learning is available for all students at the school".

If a school is operated by an approved authority that received either a June payment of early July funding or school hygiene assistance funding, contractors must sight documentation supporting the claim that this plan to reopen allowed for 50 per cent of students to return to classroom-based learning by 1 June 2020.

- Eligibility for these payments did not depend on schools achieving 50 per cent attendance by 1 June 2020.
- No attendance data is required to be sighted as part of this measure.

Further information on the reporting requirements of the regulatory changes and the financial assistance provided due to the impact of COVID-19 can be found on SchoolsHUB within the Using SchoolsHUB - Finance section.

4. Access to premises and records

All contractors involved in the 2020 Census PE are appointed as authorised persons under the *Australian Education Regulation 2013*. The appointment provides for them to access school premises and records.

5. COVID-19 impact on school visits protocol

The department has developed a protocol in the event that a school, its local government area or its jurisdiction, or the contractor is impacted by COVID-19 at the time of a scheduled school visit.

The department has a responsibility to provide assurance over the Census and a duty of care regarding individual safety. To account for the impact of COVID-19, the 2020 Census PE school visits protocol has been adjusted as follows:

- If a school is operating normally, the department expects that school visits will be conducted on-site as normal.
- If a school is closed and staff and students have been asked to stay home, then contractors will not conduct a school visit. In this instance, the school will need to contact the department to arrange a remote desktop visit.
- Remote desktop visits are an option in the event that a school is closed due COVID-19 or quarantine measures are in place as a result of the virus. This can be organised by the school through the contractor and the department.
- The department does not want contractors visiting schools where there is a possibility they might have been in contact with a person who has COVID-19. If contractors are unwell, or there is a likelihood they have been in contact with someone who has contracted COVID-19 they will not undertake school visits.
- If a school has a case of COVID-19 occur after the contractor visit, the school will need to contact the department as soon as possible so proper safety protocols can be enacted.

In the event of a remote desktop visit, contractors may adopt the following approach in order to complete the school visits:

- Conduct the Census PE remotely via teleconferencing or videoconferencing facilities and email.
- Have all supporting documentation be scanned and submitted by the school through a secure Dropbox (or equivalent).
- Hold a commencement meeting on the morning of the scheduled school visit via teleconference with the contractor.
- Hold a subsequent teleconference to discuss any identified issues.
- Hold an exit teleconference with the school to communicate any errors or adjustments.

If you have any questions on the 2020 Census Post Enumeration exercise, or have COVID-19 related concerns, please contact the department on education-schoolspostenumeration@dese.gov.au.